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# PERSONAL HISTORY OF THE SECOND EMPIRE.

## II.—THE OPPONENTS OF THE PRINCE-PRESIDENT.

BY ALBERT D. VANDAM, AUTHOR OF "AN ENGLISHMAN IN PARIS," "MY PARIS NOTE-BOOK," ETC., ETC.

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IN my previous chapter, I spoke of Princesse Mathilde as the prompter of Louis Napoleon before and after his election as President of the Second Republic. At the first blush that admission may appear a contradiction of my statement to the effect that the future Emperor was thoroughly aware of the magic potentiality contained in the name of Napoleon. But no actor, whether great or little, and however letter-perfect and certain of his audience, can afford to dispense with a prompter; for, known or unknown to the player, there may slip in among that audience a section hostile to him and bent upon "queering his pitch"—the expression is not elegant, but it is appropriate, as theatrical authorities will tell one. That section, numerous or the reverse, may work jointly or separately. It may post its members singly in different parts of the house or gather them into a serried phalanx, as was done during the "Tamburini Rows" at Her Majesty's Theatre more than fifty years ago.\* It may express its hostility openly by hisses and catcalls, or by pretended and exaggerated marks of approval and sympathy. Nay, more; it may enlist in its cause a fellow-actor of the comedian to hamper him on the very stage.

To continue the theatrical metaphor for another moment. The members of that "omnibus-box," or, to use the French term,

\* A word to the wise. The "Tamburini Rows" have been immortalized by Barham in the *Ingoldsby Legends*. But I cannot explain every allusion I may have occasion to use in the course of these articles. Many years ago I wrote in a preface to one of my books: "The writer who has time to explain everything has not much to write. The reader who is too indolent or indifferent to look up references ought not to read." I hold that opinion still.

"*loge infernale*," who had determined to "queer Louis Napoleon's pitch," either in furtherance of their own and strictly personal aggrandisement or for the purpose of showing what an inferior "mummer" he, Louis Napoleon, was in comparison with the great classical actors they had selected for the part of rulers of the French—they, the members, all adopted the tactics enumerated just now. Among them, Lamartine is the only one entitled to a certain amount—a very small amount—of respect. He, at any rate, fought Louis Napoleon with uplifted visor, and would fain have avoided fighting altogether. The consciousness that his motive for fighting was not a lofty one may have bred the reluctance; for the poet-historian of *Les Girondins* had not an invincible conviction of his infallibility in all things, like the poet-pamphleteer of *L'Histoire d'un Crime*, nor a facility for blinking unsavory facts connected with his own ambition, like the historian of *The Consulate and the Empire*. Lamartine was more honest and more honorable than either Victor Hugo or Adolphe Thiers, though that is not saying much. Joseph Méry, the friend of the elder Dumas and Balzac, the genial, amusing, and almost matchless humorist, who is scarcely known to English and American readers, but who ought to be known to every one, Méry, who rarely said an unkind word of any one, openly averred that Lamartine proclaimed the Second Republic on the 24th of February, 1848, as a means to stave off his most pressing creditors. Lamartine's subsequent explanation of his action on that day virtually substantiated Méry's indictment, for the poet admitted that at noon on that historical Thursday, "the establishment of a republic was farthest from his thoughts." But if he forsook his royalist faith, he was in no way pledged by any of his previous utterances either to Bonapartism in its ostentatious republican form as advocated by the "nephew of his uncle," or to republicanism in its Cæsaric form as interpreted by the "uncle of the nephew." Unlike Goethe, Heine, Byron, Hugo, and the rest, Lamartine had never worshipped at the shrine of the deified Corsican lieutenant of artillery; he had endeavored, though unsuccessfully, to drag down the idol and impose silence on its high-priests by that one, scathing line—

Rien d'humain ne battait sous son épaisse armure ;

he had opposed the removal of Napoleon's remains from St.

Helena and their triumphal reception in Paris, and when defeated, his cry of surrender had been, as it were, prophetic. "Very well," he exclaimed, "bring back his remains, seeing that nothing less will satisfy you. Let the pedestal to his statue be the column ;\* after all, the work is his, the monument created by him, but at any rate, do this : write on the socle, 'TO NAPOLEON ALONE.'"

Thus, nearly a score of years before the *coup d'état*, Lamartine saw and felt whence and whither the wind blew. At that very moment the son of the great Napoleon was dying at Schoenbrunn ; the second son of the great Napoleon's brother and Hortense de Beauharnais had died a twelvemonth before without issue ; the least dangerous to the welfare of France, from Lamartine's point of view, and also the least enterprising were gone ; the most daring, the mother and the third son, remained, and the poet-statesman guessed at, if he did not absolutely know, their temper. Louis Napoleon's attempt at Strasburg four years later (1836), his second attempt at Boulogne-sur-Mer four years after that (1840), and his writings during his subsequent confinement at Ham, could have left no doubt in Lamartine's mind with regard to Louis Napoleon's further plans ; and Lamartine's first thought and care when the hour for the execution of these plans had obviously struck, was their frustration. On the 2nd March, 1848, Louis Napoleon and Lamartine met in secret ; and the poet prevailed on the prince to return to England. Few of the real particulars of that interview, of the argument employed by Lamartine to induce Louis Napoleon to that step, have ever leaked out ; I may honestly claim to possess some slight information on the subject, denied to others. Truly, that information is open to the charge of being one-sided, considering that it was gathered from the lips of the Emperor himself a couple of years after his accession, at what time a national subscription was set afoot to relieve Lamartine of his debts, to which fund the Emperor contributed a handsome sum.

"If he were the merest rhymester instead of being one of the greatest poets of contemporary France, I should still owe him that much," remarked Napoleon III. during one of those occasional con-

\* The Austerlitz column, better, though wrongly, known as the Vendôme, whence the statue had been removed in 1814 after the entry of the Allied Troops into Paris. Lamartine's speech dates from 1832, when it was proposed to reinstate the statue.

versations with my relatives to which I have alluded elsewhere.\* “I owe him that much for his treatment of me in March, 1848. Neither Thiers nor Changarnier, and least of all Cavaignac, would have acted like that had they been in Lamartine’s position. I feel certain they would not have counselled me to return to England, but opposed that return with all their might when once they had me in their power, for I was virtually setting at defiance the decree of banishment against our family, which had only been specially relaxed in favor of my uncle Jérôme and his children—a proof, by the bye, that Louis Philippe was not afraid of them and that he was afraid of me : so I could not have been the utter nonentity people said I was. I should not like to say for certain what Thiers or Changarnier would have done with me, though I have a pretty correct idea ; as for Cavaignac, he would have had me shot as, I am sorry to say, my uncle had the Duc d’Enghien shot, that is, without the formality of a trial. Republican though he professed to be, he had all the making of an irresponsible tyrant in him ; republican though he was, he would not have scrupled to pose as a kind of avenger of the son of the Duc de Condé, and, what is more, the people would have let him do it, even if he had condescended to apprise them of his intention. They would probably have applauded if they had only been told of the accomplished fact ; first, because the masses are prone to applaud accomplished facts, or at any rate to acquiesce in them, provided they are accomplished boldly and promptly. If Louis XVI. had had the Tennis Court at Versailles surrounded and shelled instead of letting the proceedings take their course, there would have been no Revolution. Secondly, Cavaignac, if he had deigned to give a reason at all for thus disposing of me so unceremoniously, could have given an apparently valid one. He could have represented me as having come to overthrow the new-born Republic, and not with the intention of serving it as a French citizen. He might have been correct or not in that assertion, that is not the question. The people would have acquiesced, for it is a lie to say that the people side with the weaker ; they side with the stronger, and during the first days of March, 1848, it was not only the people but the populace that had the upper hand, not the *bourgeoisie* as in 1830, although the people in 1848 allowed themselves to be hoodwinked by a set of

the meanest and most contemptible *bourgeois* that ever lived. To this wholesale statement there are only two exceptions, Lamartine and Emile de Girardin, both of whom thoroughly despised the *bourgeois*. Lamartine's impecuniosity notwithstanding, there was not an ounce of greed in his composition; Girardin, in despite of his affluence, was not quite so indifferent to money, but his support of the Second Republic was due to other than money causes. There was, to begin with, a personal as well as a political feud between him and M. Guizot; apart from the resentment he felt against the whole of the aristocracy on account of the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of his father. *I take it*," added the Emperor in a most significant tone, "*I take it to be more noble to father a child which one knows not to be one's own than to deny the flesh of one's flesh, the blood of one's blood, because it happens not to be born in holy wedlock.*" \* He had, moreover, a grudge against Cavaignac for having given him a terrible fright, of which I will tell you one of these days.

"As for Changarnier," the Emperor went on, after a few moments, "he would have done with me what the Bourbons did with Ney; that is, given me a public trial, a kind of spectacular melodrama in some specially constituted court, and in which he would have endeavored to run me very hard as the hero of the play, for he was conceited and idiotic enough for anything, and as long as he succeeded in drawing public attention to himself, he would not have minded drawing public attention to me. What Victor Hugo would have done in Lamartine's stead, it is impossible for me to say. He might have treated me as he treated his imaginary opponents in the Chamber, viz., credited me with sentiments and projects altogether foreign to my heart and mind, in order to 'place' an eloquent speech. He might have had me tried and sentenced to death for the sake of writing another immortal *Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*; I might have become at his pen *le plus grand des Napoléons*, instead of *Napoléon le Petit*, but my posthumous greatness would have been less useful to me and to France than my actual littleness. All nonsense apart," the Emperor interrupted himself with a smile, "I am not at all sorry that I incurred the enmity of Victor Hugo, though I

\* The first part of the sentence in italics is unquestionably an allusion to the frequent doubts cast upon Louis Napoleon's own legitimacy; the second, a condemnation of the conduct of General Alexis de Girardin with regard to his natural son. General de Girardin did not behave well to him even after he had "legitimized" his "love-child."

yield to no man in my admiration of him as a poet. But I did not want a constant repetition of Boileau's line to Louis XIV.—*'Cessez de vaincre, sire, ou je cesse d'écrire ;'* and I should have inevitably had that line over and over again if I had retained his friendship. The age of the *Roi Soleil* is passed, probably never to return as far as the fulsome and non-critical worship of a ruler is concerned. The poet has had to make room for the historian and leader-writer, especially in regard to living sovereigns. The poet who would endeavor to drown critical appreciation with indiscriminate panegyrics of the sovereign thus criticised, would most likely drag that sovereign into the current with him ; at any rate he would make him look ridiculous ; and in France ridicule maims when it does not kill, especially if it be leveled at a civilian ; and according to a great many, I was only a civilian, and a sorry one at that.

“What Thiers would have done with me had he been in Lamartine's place, I repeat, it is equally impossible for me to say,” the Emperor went on. “I have often tried to think it out, but must frankly confess that I dared not pursue my thoughts to their logical conclusion. I am certainly not less prone than others to think evil of my fellow-men, but I fancy there is a tacit compact between my mind and my heart—say, between my understanding and my conscience—to find extenuating circumstances for an enemy, and that Thiers is my personal enemy, to an even greater extent than my political one, I have not the faintest doubt. I sometimes think that if Thiers had had the disposal of me at that time, there would have been neither a summary execution as in the case of Cavaignac, nor a public trial as in the case of Changarnier or Hugo, but a kind of *escamotage*. I should have disappeared, whether temporarily or permanently would have depended on circumstances. There might have been a second mystery of the ‘Iron Mask’ in history, for Thiers is a mental and moral as well as a physical coward who would not have had the pluck to resort to secret assassination, and there was no Lady Macbeth by his side to screw his courage to the sticking point. Cavaignac is a brute, but has the courage of the brute. Changarnier has courage also ; it is not the courage of Henri IV., of whom it was said, *'Son courage riait ;'* Changarnier's courage grins rather than laughs, and is more or less theatrical, like that of the Prince de Condé, who opened the trenches at Lérída to the

sound of a score of violins ; it is the dandy courage of some of the captains under Louis XIV., but it is courage for all that. Nor is Victor Hugo a coward. ‘Show me how a man sings and I will tell you how he will fight,’ Carlyle, whom you admire so much, has said ; and I fancy the axiom is generally though not invariably true. Enough. All these men, Lamartine included, have courage ; Thiers, I repeat, has none. His ‘courage’ spells ‘craft.’ Lamartine had the courage to show me indirectly that he was afraid of me, by advising me to return to England. I say indirectly, for he did not put it in that way ; he alleged that there was danger to me, not to him ; but his fear strengthened my courage ; and that is why I owe him a good turn, which I have endeavored to repay by heading the national subscription for the settlement of his debts with a handsomer sum than I would have given had he been simply the great poet he is.”

This, then, was Louis Napoleon’s opinion of the men with whom he had engaged in that game of political bluff which lasted for more than three years, though only two kept playing to the last. Lamartine threw up his hand almost directly after the first deal, *i. e.*, when he had objected to Louis Napoleon’s joining the game at all—and found that Louis Napoleon meant to join it in spite of his objection ; in other words, that neither intrigue nor threats would keep him out of France.\* For, immediately after the disturbances in June,† during which Cavaignac had virtually given himself away by showing the kind of game he meant to play henceforward, Louis Napoleon slipped into Paris while the streets around the Northern Railway station were still encumbered with the remains of the barricades. “I was compelled to leave my luggage in the cloakroom and to make my way on foot to the house of my friend who had offered me his hospitality. I only carried a very small carpet-bag,” said the Emperor afterwards, when recounting the incidents of his arrival. “I had scarcely gone a hundred yards when I was stopped by an old woman. ‘I say, young man,’ she cried, ‘just put a paving stone or so in its place ; help us to get a bit straight ; as you see we are all at sixes and sevens, some one must put an end to the confusion.’ ‘That’s exactly what I have come here for, madame,’ I replied. The old

\* The order for Louis Napoleon’s arrest, transmitted by telegraph to every prefect and sub-prefect in France on the 12th of June, 1848, and posted up in every commune almost immediately afterwards.

† Not to be confounded with the revolt of June, 1849, which was quelled by Changarnier.



woman did not know how absolutely true these words were; I myself have often pondered them since, and invariably been reminded in connection with them of that incident in Edmund Kean's life when he trudged to Drury Lane in the snow on the night of his first appearance on that stage which was to witness his greatest triumphs."

Cavaignac's first and practically last hand was a bad one from the outset; nevertheless he "came in" and drew cards, trusting first to his own faculty for "bluffing"; secondly, to that same faculty as displayed by those who were betting on his hand; namely, the whole of the staff of *Le National*, founded eighteen years previously by Thiers and Armand Carrel and edited at the period of which I treat by Armand Marrast. That staff ought to have been warned, by the fate of one of the founders of the paper (Armand Carrel), of the danger of excessive "bluffing," nay, of the mortal penalty attached to such "bluffing." But a few months of phenomenal sneers in that respect had made them absolutely reckless. *Le National* literally governed France for a little while,\* and its members fancied they would be allowed to continue governing, if Cavaignac should succeed in his candidature for the Presidency. Neither their bluffing, though, nor that of Lamoricière and Dufaure, who were staking on Cavaignac's game with the moneys of the state, was of much avail; the game was lost to them before Louis Napoleon had said that he would "see" Cavaignac's hand. "Your candidate does not stand the ghost of a chance," wrote an electioneering canvasser from the provinces whither he had been sent by Lamoricière. "Even his name is against him." "Cavaignac, Cavaignac," said an elector, "Cavaignac means nothing at all to Frenchmen. You say he has been in Africa; but I never heard of him. If his name were Geneviève de Brabant or that of one of the four sons of Aymon,† it might do; it would convey some kind of story, but, I repeat, that of Cavaignac conveys nothing at all. I prefer that of Napoleon; there is a ring about it; it arouses echoes in one's mind and heart, the echoes of battle-marches to which our fathers and grandfathers went to victory at Jena, at Austerlitz, at Marengo. To defeat also, as at

\* See *An Englishman in Paris*, vol. ii., chap. i., where there is a list of the government appointments held by the members, literary and otherwise, of *Le National* in the beginning of 1848.

† The four knights of a Carlovingian legend who were mounted on one horse named Bayard.

Waterloo, as you say." This in answer to a timid remark of mine. "Well, yes, Waterloo was a defeat; a defeat more glorious, perhaps, than a victory; but your General Cavaignac won't retrieve it, and a second Napoleon may." "I am afraid," concluded the agent, "that eleven-twelfths of the electors hold a similar opinion." As will be seen from this, the Boucards and Latapies had done their work; the Napoleonic legend which they had sown broadcast was blossoming into fruit.

Changarnier scarcely played at all in that first deal. He made good his "ante" and drew four cards to a king;\* but those cards were not sufficiently good to admit of his betting, and before his turn for betting came he had flung them away, determined to "sit tight" for a while and not to "come in" except on a good hand, when he would bluff on sure grounds.

Different from Changarnier's tactics were those of Hugo and Thiers, neither of whom played at all in that first deal; but sat watching the game, or rather one player, Louis Napoleon, in order to get at his system.† They might as well have watched Kaempfer's automatic chess-player for all the information they did get. Hugo, a short time after the first deal had been won by Louis Napoleon, on the 10th December, 1848, practically gave up all idea of playing. Not so Thiers, and for the next three years the game becomes virtually a three-handed one between the Prince-President, the erstwhile Minister of Louis Philippe, and the General whom Marshal Bugeaud once compared to the pack-horse of the *Maréchal de Saxe*, but who fondly imagined himself to be a second Napoleon I., not only sword in hand, but pen in hand, and especially in speech. We shall meet with him again, and fill in the outlines of his portrait as given by the Emperor. It is time to look at Thiers, "the great Thiers" as some of the French journalists continue to call him; the same journalists who dispute the adjective "great" to Bismarck "by reason of his craft," although the ex-Chancellor would have scorned to resort to a single one of the mean shifts which crop up daily, nay, hourly, in the life of the French so-called statesman of whom, moreover, it is

\* The Comte de Chambord. There is no doubt that the 4,687 votes polled by Changarnier at the Presidential elections were given by isolated Legitimists in batches of two, three, and four. They, the voters, saw in him a would-be Monk of another Bourbon Restoration.

† It is worthy of record that among the stray votes at the Presidential elections there were not a dozen for either Thiers or Hugo. Thiers, for reasons that will appear directly, had not even come forward as a candidate. Hugo never had a desire to become President of the Republic, but coveted the portfolio of Foreign Affairs.

difficult to record one private or political action sufficiently generous to throw a lasting ray of light in the otherwise sombre picture.

Of course, I am not going to write Thiers' biography. I cannot too often remind the reader that I lay no claim to the title of historian or to that of biographer. I would, moreover, state, once for all, that, notwithstanding the many assertions to the contrary of both friendly and unfriendly critics, I hold no brief for the late Emperor of the French, and that least of all have I been engaged as the Devil's Advocate against the memory of the first President of the Third Republic. The French Republicans may canonize him and Gambetta and Favre for what I care, and if they want another trio of such saints as "understudies" I will give them a long list from which to choose. This much I do say: whenever and wherever historians put the memory of Napoleon III. on its trial for the calamities that resulted to France from the Franco-German War, the memory of Thiers ought to stand arraigned by the side of the other as *an accessory* before the fact. Lest this should appear an unfounded accusation on my part, I will proceed at once to give chapter and verse. At least two of the actors in that particular prologue to the War are alive. They have the option of contradicting me.

One morning in the early part of June, 1870, hence more than a month before the declaration of war between France and Germany, the Emperor, being then at St. Cloud, was strolling gently along that large avenue of sycamores situated opposite the windows of his private apartments on the ground floor of the palace. The disease from which he had been suffering for several years, and which was eventually to carry him to his grave, had reached an acute stage; nevertheless on that morning he was more or less free from pain. By his side walked his kinswoman, the Duchesse de Mouchy (*née* Princesse Anna Murat), who had only arrived a few minutes previously, and joined him thus informally at her own request, as she had an important communication to make. It was to the following effect. That same morning, M. Thiers, through the intermediary of the Marquis Philippe de Massa, had requested an interview with her. She, the Duchesse, was to prevail upon the Emperor to grant Thiers a private audience. "What can M. Thiers want with the Emperor?" the Duchesse had exclaimed in a tone of sur-

prise. The surprise was not unjustified, considering that M. Thiers at that time was not only the avowed enemy of the Empire, but of the Emperor himself. She was less surprised at Thiers' selection of an ambassador in the shape of a captain of a crack regiment of dragoons, and personally attached to the Emperor. The second husband of the marquis' mother was the Comte Roger (du Nord), a consistent Republican, and an intimate friend of Thiers, at whose house the Comtesse spent many evenings, and whither her son accompanied her now and then. The Emperor could be vindictive enough, but his vindictiveness was, at the best, sporadic, and he often swallowed a camel in the shape of an offence while straining at a gnat. He never forgave Lady Jersey for having poohpooled his request for the hand of her daughter; he sent David d'Angers into exile for having refused to finish the tomb of Queen Hortense; while he condoned, as I will show in the course of these pages, much graver injuries against himself. Adam Smith has said somewhere that people will sooner tolerate the enemies of their friends than the friends of their enemies. Louis Napoleon was the exception; he showed no resentment against the friends of his enemies, but he would scarcely have tolerated the enemies of his friends. Thiers, on the other hand, knew no such generosity; he tolerated the enemies of his friends—if he could get something by it—while it is doubtful whether he would have welcomed the friend of an enemy. In this instance, Napoleon III. did not object to his young ordnance officer visiting the house of Thiers; Thiers, on the other hand, would not have admitted him for a moment, but for his constant hope of worming some more or less important secret out of a charming and accomplished dragoon who had virtually the run of the Tuileries. It could scarcely be otherwise with one bearing the name of Régnier. In view of all this, the Duchesse de Mouchy, though surprised at Thiers' request, was not surprised at his choice of the ambassador.

In reply to the Duchesse's question, M. de Massa gave some additional information. "M. Thiers," he said, "wishes you to tell the Emperor that a near, nay, impending, war between France and Prussia is unavoidable; that, to carry on this war successfully the Emperor will require men of tried knowledge and experience instead of the incapable ones of which the Ollivier Cabinet is composed; that the Emperor will require, above all,

popular men who have the ear and confidence of the nation, and that, under the circumstances, he is ready and willing to form a ministry under his own leadership."

The Duchesse pondered for a moment. "You are right," she remarked at last; "the news is indeed very important and serious, but before I can communicate it to the Emperor, I must have M. Thiers' personal permission." M. de Massa at once saw the force of the remark. He went away immediately and in less than half an hour returned, accompanied by Thiers, who not only repeated what M. de Massa had said, but pointed out to the Duchesse the necessity of her seeing the Emperor at once. So anxious, in fact, was Thiers to set the matter going that he offered to stay at the Duchesse's while she proceeded to St. Cloud. Here again we have particulars which will remove the faintest doubt as to the absolute truth of the whole affair. Among other precious autographs she had a collection of letters from Fénelon to her husband's kinswoman (the Vicomtesse de Noailles), during the great controversy between the famous Archbishop of Cambray and Bossuet. Thiers asked permission to examine them while awaiting her return.

The Emperor had listened to the Duchesse without interrupting her by as much as a word; he had only smiled, with one of those ineffable smiles which, to his friends, needed no interpretation, which all the misinterpretation of his enemies failed to rob of their charm. When she had quite finished, he led the way to his room, still in silence. "My dear Anna," he said, when they were seated, "this is not the first nor the second time M. Thiers has made similar overtures to me under one pretext or another. But very recently, Madame Colonna\* came to offer me his co-operation to found the parliamentary *régime*. I may frankly tell you that I have not much faith in nor much sympathy with this very meddlesome, arbitrary, and irrepressible personage. I have a distinct recollection of his tactics in the early days of the Presidency. He positively pervaded the Elysée. Each morning he came, as it were, to settle with me—in reality for me—my programme for the day; he brought me my speeches, practically his speeches, ready written out; in short, he endeavored to interfere in everything. He had to have a finger in every pie; no ques-

\* Adèle, Princesse Colonna di Castiglioni, née d'Affry, better known to the world at large under her artistic pseudonym of "Marcello" the sculptor.

tion was to be discussed or decided without him.\* More than twenty years have passed since the ceremony of inauguration of the chief magistracy, but I remember very vividly his look of stupefaction and anger, when on the morning of that day I gave him back the manuscript of a speech he had composed for me, telling him at the same time that, though deeply grateful for his counsels and his arduous interest in me, I intended henceforth to manage my own affairs. Our estrangement and his frenzied opposition date from that morning. I have been told that journeymen bakers suffer excruciating pains in their muscles, when an accident compels them to leave off kneading the dough. M. Thiers suffers similarly from being bereft of power, from being no longer the arbiter of the Government. His restless opposition is in reality the acute St. Vitus's dance of inactivity. But for that St. Vitus's dance he would be dead. Nevertheless, in view of the grave events with which we may be confronted at any moment, I would recall him to power, if I thought he could be useful. I do not say that such a step would afford me pleasure, for I do not like the man and have no reason to like him; but it would give me no pain. Unfortunately, I am no longer the master in that respect. I have taken in earnest to my part of a constitutional ruler, and will not depart from it. The actual Ministry commands considerable majority in both Chambers; to dismiss this Ministry abruptly and without a valid motive, would be an act of personal interference which I must no longer commit. If, at some future period, near or distant, the Chamber should overthrow M. Ollivier's cabinet on an interpellation of M. Thiers or on an important question, I might entrust M. Thiers with the task of constituting a Ministry; but at present I am bound to attempt nothing against a Minister who appears to enjoy the confidence of Parliament. Pray thank M. Thiers for me, and tell him that, while deeply obliged for his warning and trouble, I cannot, at any rate for the present, accept his proposal. He is an old and experienced parliamentarian, and

\* "And in fact, up till 1830, when he was nearly forty-four, he (Guizot) had never seen the sea. 'And if it had not been for an electoral journey to Normandy, I might not have seen it then,' he said. I pointed out to him that M. Thiers had never had a country house; that he did not seem to care for nature, for birds, or for flowers. 'Ah, that's different,' he smiled. 'I did not care for the country, because I had never seen it. Thiers does not like it, because the birds, the flowers, the trees, live and grow without his interference, and he does not care that anything on earth should happen without his having a hand in it.'"—*An Englishman in Paris*, vol. ii., ch. 2.

will no doubt understand and appreciate the motives that prompt my conduct."

Whether Thiers understood the motives of the Emperor's refusal of his services or not, it is certain that he failed to appreciate them; for when the Duchesse de Mouchy, on her return to her house in the Parc Monceau, gave him the Emperor's answer—toned down, we may be sure, and shorn of the sovereign's prefatorial remarks as to Thiers' character—Thiers flew into a towering rage, stamped his feet and bounced out of the room, exclaiming in that shrill treble of his: "Is that it? He does not want me. He'll find to his cost that he does want me. And then I'll not want him."

I will show later on how Thiers kept his word. I anticipated the story of events in order to prove that at no time of his career was Louis Napoleon the dupe of Thiers, not even immediately before and during the miscarried attempt at Boulogne when the future Emperor issued a decree appointing his enemy—for he always knew Thiers to be such—chief of the Provisional Government. Thiers, in spite of everything that has been said about his marvellous intuition and the rest, was, at times, absolutely purblind to the effect of his duplicity and craft upon others. Out of that duplicity and craft he had woven around himself a fabric so thick as to be literally impenetrable from the inside, and he fondly imagined that those outside could not espy his actions. He was a bad sportsman, or he would have known that the experienced hunter watches the dense undergrowth that hides the wild brute, and not the wild brute itself, which in reality he cannot see, whose movements are only revealed to him by signs imperceptible, by sounds inaudible to the inexperienced, but of whose presence in that undergrowth he is nevertheless practically certain, because he has "tracked" his quarry thither, guided by the devastation the latter has spread around in its course, by the blood of his victims. Thiers' track was positively reeking with the blood of his victims, the blood of the Republicans whom he had pitted against the Bourbons in 1830, against the d'Orléans in '48; it was bestrewn with the maimed remains of two dynasties, and yet he fancied that he would secure another victim in Louis Napoleon, whom he had already endeavored to kill physically, if possible; politically, if failing in the other attempt, eight years before the latter's advent to the Presidency. I am referring once

more to the affair at Boulogne, which every one was agreed in saying was a trap laid by the little man for the son of Queen Hortense. What every one did not and does not know is this. Prince Louis suspected it to be a trap, though he did not expect it to close upon him, as it did, for six years. I have by me several notes referring to private remarks on that subject by the Emperor, which preclude all doubts as to Prince Louis Napoleon's mental grasp of the whole situation. Their reproduction here, even in the most condensed form, is unfortunately out of the question. These notes show conclusively: 1. That Louis Napoleon fostered few illusions with regard to the success of the projected Boulogne attempt; 2. That had he considered it to be even more of a forlorn hope than he did consider it, he would still have attempted it, because he wished to draw attention to himself at any cost, and because his financial position was almost desperate. Of two things, one would assuredly happen: he would be tried in some superior court and his name would be on every Frenchman's lips; or if Louis Philippe was still frightened of untoward revelations with regard to the influence of the Napoleonic legend, as he had been in 1836, he would send Louis Napoleon out of the country once more with a decent sum of money; 3. The appointment of Thiers as chief of the Provisional Government meant nothing in the event of Louis Napoleon's success. That appointment could be rescinded at the first convenient opportunity; for even as early as 1840, Louis Napoleon had no intention of affording Thiers the smallest chance of reducing to practice, in his (Louis Napoleon's) case, the formula Thiers had invented in order to lord it over Louis Philippe: "The king reigns, but does not govern." The notes of these conversations bear no particular dates, only the years in which they took place are mentioned. Those to which I am referring just now more specially are labelled 1853, hence a few months after Thiers' return from exile; at which time the empire was settling down to its new position, and when, as some critics might remark, "the Emperor could afford to pretend to be wise after the event." That Napoleon III. pretended to no such wisdom, that he would not have intrusted Thiers with a portfolio at no matter what period of his presidential or imperial career will be sufficiently patent from the following fact. During the Odilon-Barrot Ministry, the opposition of Thiers became so utterly



unbearable that the Premier had him and several members of his faction summoned to the Elysée, and at the end of the interview proposed that Thiers himself should form a Ministry. Thiers declined the offer and for very good reasons, for after he was gone, the Prince President turned to Barrot: "Do you imagine, my dear Minister," he said, "that if M. Thiers had taken you at your word and consented to accept a portfolio, I would have consented to intrust him with one? If you entertained such an idea for a single moment, you must have been strangely mistaken in me."

No; a thousand times no; Louis Napoleon never for one single instant mistook Thiers' character or intentions. He knew the value of Thiers' agitation in favor of the removal of his uncle's remains from St. Helena to Paris, which agitation was coincident with the publication of the *History of the Consulate and the Empire*; consequently an enormous self-advertisement for the author; he also knew the reasons that had prompted the laying of the trap at Boulogne. If in the face of all this he appointed Thiers the chief of the Provisional Government, it was to meet craft with craft. If the expedition had been successful, the appointment would have been rescinded; the expedition failing as it did, it simply discredited Thiers in the eyes of the adherents of Louis Philippe, for there were letters to prove that Thiers had not been thus appointed without his knowledge or against his will. Louis Napoleon made many mistakes in his life; he never made a mistake with regard to Thiers' potentiality or goodwill to him and his dynasty.

Thiers, on the other hand, made few mistakes from his own point of view, and fewer still in pursuit of the aim of his life, which was, as M. Charles Merriau, who knew him better than any one, expressed it, "to found a Conservative Republic and to marry *her* in the capacity of President." But he made a terrible mistake in his estimate of Louis Napoleon's potentiality before and after his election to the Presidency. One single instance among a hundred will bear out my contention. Immediately after the insurrection of June, '49, Thiers, frantic with apprehension, ran to his stockbroker, yelling to him, "Sell all my securities." "Leave them alone," said the other quietly; "Napoleon will save you all from spoliation and bankruptcy." "He!" exclaimed Thiers, scornfully, "he is too great an imbecile!"

This was the man with whom the Prince-President had to contend in and out of the Chamber. Was the game equal? Yes, and it would have remained equal during the Empire if the Emperor had trusted to himself alone. Even in 1849-1851 the game was equal, though at the beginning of that period Louis Napoleon had scarcely an ally in that Chamber. When Dupin *ainé* and Morny joined the small group of his apparently faithful partisans, the game was practically half won or they would not have joined. But they, as well as those who completed the victory—Persigny, Fleury, Maupas, Saint-Arnaud, Dr. Véron, and the rest—must be described in the next chapter.

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(*To be continued.*)